Sketch of Cutting Marsh /

SKETCH OF CUTTING MARSH. BY JOHN E. CHAPIN, D. D.1

1 The author is a Presbyterian divine, at Neehah. The paper was originally written as a sermon, but has been condensed by the Editor to fit it for publication in the present form. It is valuable as presenting a summary of the letters, journal, and other documents left by Cutting Marsh, which have been deposited in the archives of this Society by the Presbyterian synod of Wisconsin. These papers are described upon page 39, *post*, in connection with the publication of a selection therefrom.—E d.

On the first day of May, 1830, the Rev. Cutting Marsh.2 a young man lately graduated from the Theological Seminary at Andover, Mass., landed at Green Bay, then in the Territory of Michigan. His destination was Statesburg, twenty miles up the Fox River from Green Bay, and in near vicinity of what is now South Kaukauna. Here was the Grand Kakalin (Big Rapids), the Indian name from

2 Cutting Marsh, son of Samuel White and Sally (Brown) Marsh, was born in Danville, Vermont, July 20, 1800. His given name was derived from his paternal grandfather's maternal grandfather, Cutting Moody. The early years of our subject were passed upon his father's farm. Prom 1819 until 1822 he spent in preparation for college at Phillips Academy, Andover, Mass. He graduated from Dartmouth College in 1826 and from Andover Theological Seminary in 1829. On April 22, 1829, he was licensed to preach by the Andover Association of Congregational ministers; and on September 24, 1829, was ordained as a foreign missionary at Park Street Church in Boston. In October, 1830, he departed for his field of labor among the Stockbridge Indians of the Northwest, as a missionary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.

Reaching Detroit on his way to Green Bay November 1, 1830, he found that the last boat for the season had been gone for two months. Accordingly he went to Maumee, Ohio, where there was a mission among the Ottawas. There he spent the winter. In the ensuing spring he started for Green Bay, which point he reached Friday, April 30, 1830. Upon the very next day (Saturday) he traveled by boat up the Fox River to the station of the Stockbridges at the Grand Kakalin, then called also Statesburg and now known as South Kaukauna. Although he reached his destination late at night and very weary, he preached the next day (Sunday, May 2, 1830 his first sermon to his new charge.

The mission house of the Stockbridges which became his residence, “was in those days almost the only house of entertainment between Green Bay and Fond du Lac.”— *Wis. Hist. Colls*., xii, p. 189, *note*.

When, in consequence of the treaty of the United States with the Menominee Nation of October 27, 1832 (7 *U.S. Statutes at Large*, 405), and of the acceptance of the new cession, proposed by said treaty, by the Stockbridges and other New York Indians (*Ibid*., 409), the Stockbridges removed to their new lands, Marsh accompanied his people. His new home was therefore at Stockbridge, in what is now Calumet County, east of Lake Winnebago. At the time of this removal, and down to 1840, there were but three whites residing within the present Calumet County, of whom Marsh was one. The period of the removal of the Stockbridges from Statesburg to their new home, which they named Stockbridge, is not exactly given. Doubtless it was in the early spring of 1834. Certainly the removal was practically complete early in June of that year. On June 19, 1834, Marsh and his five Stockbridges started on their missionary visit to the trans-Mississippi Foxes and Sioux, the report of which is contained in the letter edited in the present volume, *post*.

On November 2, 1837, Marsh married at Stockbridge, Eunice Osmer of Buffalo, New York, born in 1798 at Whitestown, New York. She had taught among the Ojibways at Fort Gratiot from 1821 to 1824; and from 1824 until about the time of her marriage, as a teacher in a

mission school at Mackinac. A daughter of this marriage, Sarah E. Marsh, resides (1900) in Chicago.

Marsh's labors for the Stockbridges continued until the American Board discontinued its work among them in 1848—he preached his final sermon under the Board, at De Pere, October 29, 1848. Marsh reported frequently of his work and of the condition and characteristics of his Indian charge to the American Board and also to the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge, of Edinburgh, Scotland, which latter Society also gave aid to the Stockbridge mission.

From 1848 for about three years, Marsh was a home missionary in Northern Wisconsin, with Green Bay as his home. In 1851 he removed to Waupaca, situated on an Indian reservation, the land of which had just been opened for settlement. The country was new and for several years he had appointments for preaching at different places every Sunday, some of them being twenty miles from his home. He died at Waupaca July 4, 1873. His wife, who had been his wise and faithful helper, died December 27, 1855. A cut of this self-denying and devoted preacher faces p. 116 of Davidson's *In Unnamed Wisconsin*.—W. W. Wight.

26 which Kaukauna is derived. Here were situated the Stockbridge Indians, a tribe among whom the Brainerds and Jonathan Edwards had labored in Massachusetts before the War of the Revolution. The Stockbridges were transferred from Massachusetts to the State of New York, and lived in Onondaga County until 1821, when they were removed to this point on the Fox River. A church had been organized among them in 1818, and in 1825 we find the Rev. Jesse Miner establishing a home among them as their pastor, under the direction of the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions. He had come on first without his family, had labored very successfully, and then returned East, and brought his family into the wilderness; but just as he was completing a house and barn for them, he died, November 22, 1829. His grave is still to be seen on the high-bank of the river above Kaukauna.

It was to supply this vacancy that young Marsh came to Green Bay in 1830, both as minister and physician. We 27 see from Marsh's diary and correspondence at this time, that he was the product of the sober, thrifty, self-reliant, and stalwart life of New England; the son of a pious home, and the pupil of that truly high education which leads a man to covet usefulness rather than treasure, and to rejoice in sacrifice rather than in ease.

On reaching the field he found a settlement on the southeast side of the Fox River, and stretching along its banks some four or five miles, and from a mile and a half to two miles back from the stream. The Stockbridges had opened farms, lived in log cabins, raised corn and wheat, and owned live stock. They had a church building and a school house. But there were only two white people in all the region, except at Green Bay, where were a garrison of United States troops and a few settlers, mostly French-Canadians. The whole number of the Stockbridge Indian settlement at and near Kaukauna was 225 souls, with 39 church members.

28

But the mission aimed at a wider enterprise than the supplying of the gospel to this small band of semi-civilized and Christian Indians. The large and savage tribes of the Menomonees, the Brothertowns, and the Winnebagoes were in close vicinity, and it was intended through this settlement to reach them with Christian influences. The letter to Mr. Miner, from Jeremiah Evarts, the distinguished statesman and lawyer, then at the head of the Board of Missions, which appears upon a later page, was written only a year or two before Evarts's death; it sets forth the rules and the aims that are to govern the mission.

In Marsh's diary, reports, and letters, we read of that devoted missionary's daily round of work, his visits to the sick and dying, his personal interviews with the impenitent and the careless, with the anxious and the troubled, with the poor and the needy, and the ignorant. We see him preaching twice on every Sunday, superintending the Sunday School, conducting a weekly prayer meeting, laboring in revivals, and rejoicing in new converts. We see him following up the delinquent in duty, encouraging the weak,

distributing religious books and tracts, burying the dead, and comforting the afflicted. His hands and heart are continually full. Sometimes we find him overwhelmed with care and responsibility, and a sense of his own unfitness and unworthiness; but never once does he think of abandoning his duty, of forsaking his post.

It seems that soon after entering upon his work, Marsh came under the partial care of the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge, a body whose headquarters were at Edinburgh. Marsh's letters and yearly reports to that Society give us a full view of his life in this mission work. He tells of striking conversions, of triumphant deaths, of the victories of faith over all the adversities of life as then seen. He tells of the awful depravity as seen in the savage state, the cruel neglect of the aged and the weak, the revolting superstitions of drunken revelries—for, as ever, whiskey was the curse 29 and ruin of the Indian, the cause of the horrid murders which occurred so often, and of the exceeding difficulty experienced in reaching the Indian with the gospel.

We see in the journals of 1832, how the mission was disturbed by the Black Hawk War. Rumors of invading bands of Sacs and Foxes, of stealthy onset, of bloody massacre, and of general destruction, pervaded all the vast wilds of Wisconsin. Between the frontier posts of Fort Winnebago (Portage) and Fort Howard (Green Bay), there was a frequent passage of hurrying messengers, and at last the march of soldiers and war-painted Indians in the service of the United States.1 The mission was full of daily alarms, and many of the families and all of the assistant missionaries went to Fort Howard for protection; but our missionary held his ground, looking after those who remained, and continuing the work as well as he could. After a time the excitement subsided, and peace again pervaded the Fox River valley.

1 Reference is here made to Stambaugh's Expedition. See “Story of the Black Hawk War,” and “Boyd Papers,” in *Wis. Hist. Colls*., xii, pp. 216–298.—E d.

The question of the removal of the settlement to a more favorable location now began to be agitated, and we find Marsh a member of an exploring company which set out from Statesburg in the late summer of 1832. They embark in boats at the foot of the Grand Kakalin, and begin the ascent of the Rapids. He is charmed with the sound of the dashing waters; with the shores, some forty feet high, covered with dense forests and grape vines; with the green boughs often hanging over into the water. About sundown they arrived at the foot of Little Butte des Morts, just above Appleton, where the river expands into the broad and quiet surface which reaches up to Doty's Island. Here they camped for the night, first having a service of song and prayer. The next morning they reached the island, and it is described as a beautiful spot about two miles long and one wide. It was occupied by a small band of the Winnebago tribe. Near the upper end 30 of the island he describes the appearances of an ancient cultivation-the lines of old corn rows still plainly discernible, and yet so far in the past that trees from twelve to eighteen inches in diameter had grown upon them. This would carry the cultivation of that spot back some sixty or a hundred years anterior to the Revolutionary War.

Here the missionary, with two companions, left the boat to cross Lake Winnebago, while he followed around the shore on foot. He describes the low, marshy ground at first encountered, and then the gradual rising of the shores until they come to an abrupt, rocky height of some two hundred feet, which we know by the name of Clifton. Farther on they encountered an abundant stream of pure water; its source is a ground spring, giving forth a current large enough to run a mill. They found another stream, and followed it until they reached an elevation giving a view of the whole scene. A dense forest of the finest timber sloped down to the edge of the lake, whose bright waters stretched away to the opposite shore, and off to the left, beyond the horizon.

As they descended to rejoin the boat, just as the sun had sunk, sounds of Indian music, interspersed with savage howls, came up from the depths of the forest. It was judged to be

an Indian camp, celebrating by a war dance some victory in the late trouble with the Sacs. Our explorers were not discovered.

On their return, Marsh remarks upon the wonderful natural advantages possessed by this region: the fertile soil, as indicated in the growth of the timber, the salubrity of the climate, and the best water-power in the United States. He sees in it a rich heritage of the coming civilization.

The result of this exploration was the removal of the Stockbridges, in 1834, from the foot of the Grand Kakalin to the east shore of Lake Winnebago, where the village of Stockbridge now stands. Here, with better soil, timber, and greater isolation,—for the vicinity of the white community had, as ever, proved a serious detriment to the recovery and elevation of the Indians to Christian civilization, 31 —the work of confirming and developing the tribe was prosecuted. Here, for fourteen years longer, Marsh devotedly toiled.

There is an interesting letter to Marsh, dated from Fort Snelling, September 10, 1835, from Maj. Gustavus Loomis, of the First infantry, the commandant, inquiring about domestics. The latter wants a Christian man and woman to take charge of his household of four; if such can be sent from Stockbridge, he will pay their expenses and fifteen dollars per month during the first year, and, if efficient, twenty dollars per month thereafter: this with board. Full directions are given as to the journey; first by boat from Stockbridge to the portage, then down the Wisconsin to Prairie du Chien, thence by steamboat to Fort Snelling.

In another letter a lady, Mrs. Julia E. Stevens, gives a very interesting account of a journey over this route in June, 1885. She mentions the gentlemanly and Christian officers at Forts Winnebago and Crawford,—Col. Zachary Taylor, at the latter place, being especially civil and hospitable. Religious services were held in all these places on the Sabbath, and well attended. Major Loomis at Fort Snelling was an elder in the Presbyterian church, and all his family were Christians. He expresses himself as deeply interested in Marsh's work.

But in the year 1848 that work ended in the separation of Mr. Marsh from the Indians, and the ultimate division of the tribe- one party choosing to be citizens, and continuing on their farms at Stockbridge; the other retaining their tribal relations, and removing to a new reservation at Keshena, near Shawano. This breaking up is attributed largely to Jeremiah Slingerland, an educated Indian minister, who died a few years ago while in connection with the Winnebago Presbytery.1

1 Slingerland was a Stockbridge. He married Sarah Irene Seymour, a white woman, who was associated with her husband for thirty years in teaching a government school among his people. She died August 15, 1892.—E d.

Mr. Marsh had thus spent eighteen years of his life in 32 uninterrupted labor among this people. There is only one record of absence in the whole time.1 Far away in the wilderness, separated from his old friends by vast spaces and by rare and difficult communication, he is cast as a seed into the ground.

1 During his visit to the Sacs and Foxes, in 1834, of which his report is published, *post*.—E d.

In his report made to the secretary of the Scottish Society, at the end of the fourteenth year of his labor, he frankly states his disappointment at the results. This disappointment arises out of the fuller knowledge he now had, of the native character. He had not realized the favorable impressions at first entertained. The Indians had now been under the influence of the gospel for a hundred and ten years,—ever since the Brainerds had labored among them,—yet they were not wholly delivered from paganism, even in the membership of the church. Among other obstacles to their moral and social advancement are a lack of integrity of character, of principle and truthfulness, of stability, an aversion to mental effort, and an unconquerable opposition to restraint. Their fickleness, insincerity, indolence, want of moral courage, and inability to comprehend divine truth, are obstacles to their elevation. Had it not been for the saintly lives here and there, who had survived

temptation, he would have had no comfort in his work. But very little remained of visible result. The Indian communities fade away—neither churches nor schools take root and grow. They hold feebly to land and citizenship. The race perishes in the light of civilization, and that not alone through the wrongs inflicted upon them. They seem incapable of the attainments that lead up to high character and stable power. But while this is true as a general fact, yet the many converts gathered by missionary labor are an abundant compensation for the outlay in men and money.

There are now not more than twenty-five Indians left in the neighborhood of Stockbridge, and these attend the Congregational and Methodist churches. At Keshena, there is a feeble band of Christian Indians, a remnant of this old 33 Stockbridge church, but they are constantly on the decrease. The conkshell by which the Brainerds used to call the people together for worship, a hundred and fifty years ago, and was used for that purpose up to the end of Marsh's labors, was sent by his daughter two or three years ago to be deposited in the rooms of the Presbyterian Historical Society at Philadelphia, where it now is.

But we now turn to another side of Marsh's labors. We shall now see him bearing an important part in laying the foundations of a new civilization in the valley of the Fox. We find him in April, 1837, setting out from Stockbridge for Green Bay; thence in a steamboat to Manitowoc, thence to Sheboygan, and thence to Milwaukee, the fare being $3.87½. On April 11, he takes part in the organization of of a Presbyterian church, after a lively discussion with the Congregationalists as to the form of government. The vote was 15 to 11, in favor of the Presbyterian form.

In September, 1838, he takes part in the dedication of the Presbyterian church at Green Bay. It was a joyful occasion. The little church organized two years before (1836), had struggled through great difficulties and were realizing more than their expectations. Marsh seems to have preached the first sermon in it, September 9, 1838, from the words, “We walk by faith, not by sight.” In the evening, the dedication sermon was preached by the Rev. Stephen Peet, then of Milwaukee, from the words in the 48th Psalm, “Walk about

Zion, number her towers," etc. He describes the occasion as one of the most interesting he had ever enjoyed.

Again, early in January, 1841, a party of ministers call on him at Stockbridge. They are Moses Ordway, from South Prairieville; Stephen Peet, of Milwaukee; and O. F. Curtis, of Prairieville. They had come up through the wilderness from Milwaukee, on their way to Green Bay, to install Jeremiah Porter as the pastor of that church. After a day or two, Marsh joins them, and the pastor is installed, Peet preaching the sermon from the words, "For they 4 34 watch for your souls," etc. Curtis delivered the charge to the pastor, and Ordway the charge to the people. This service occurred on January 4.

One of these brethren, Moses Ordway, seems to have continued with Marsh in a protracted meeting of some two weeks, at this time in Stockbridge. From the various glimpses we get of the man, Ordway was an interesting and forceable character, courageous, clear-headed, direct, and shrewd, as well as devoted; he seems to have been tower of strength in that day. His opinions and sayings are much prized; we find traces of him in the important discussions in all the conventions, and in many of the revivals and church organizations in this region. He came to the Territory in 1836, from Western New York, and the last trace I find of him is in 1857, when he is without charge at Rockford.

Marsh, as we have seen, closed his connection with the Indians in 1848, after eighteen years of service. We find him in October of that year, at De Pere, having engaged to preach there for a year. But his diary now becomes a blank, and we have not a word further concerning his work here.

In the summer of 1849, he is in the service of the American Home Missionary Society, with headquarters at Green Bay. He proceeds up the river on horseback, on very bad roads; he passes the scene of his early labors, near Kaukauna, with mournful reflections—for the houses are in ruins, the fields overgrown with bushes, and the grave of his predecessor, Jesse Miner, is almost obscured.1 The murmur of the waters in the rapids is the only voice

that speaks of the unchanged. At Appleton, he finds a main street cut through the dense forest, and here and there a home in the woods.

1 See Tanner's description of the grave, in Kelso cemetery, in *Wis.Hist. Soc. Proc*., 1899, p. 216.— Ed.

On August 23, 1849, he is at Neenah, is much surprised at its growth, crosses over to Doty's Island on a ferry, for eleven cents, calls upon Rev. A. P. Clinton there, goes 35 from there over to Menasha, “a suddenly got up place,” thirteen months old.

In May, 1850, he passes Appleton again, and finds it with five hundred people. He comes to Mr. Ladd's, just west of Neenah, through dreadful roads. Then in Neenah, he finds Dr. Gallentine, just recovering from a severe illness; goes out to Deacon Mitchell's, and finds them mourning their son and first-born child. He meets Dr. Ayres, Dr. Fitch, and Dr. Pugsley. May 26th, he preaches at Neenah, in the morning, from 2 Pet. 3:11. “Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in holy conversation and godliness.” In the evening, he preaches at Menasha.

August 26, 1849, we find him administering the communion at Fond du Lac, at the residence of Mr. Gillett. August 28 and 29, he is at Lake Mills, thirty-six miles from Beaver Dam, attending a meeting of the convention. The ministers mentioned as present, were E. J. Montague and Mr. Kanouse. On their return to Beaver Dam, a stirring temperance meeting was held at that place, at which Mr. Marsh made the closing speech. The next morning his horse's tail was found to be cropped, as the expressed resentment of the enemy. Temperance societies were vigorous, and temperance taverns often to be found.

From Beaver Dam he goes to Dodge Center (now Juneau), and holds service in the home of one Coleman. Subsequently he labors a week in this field, with Ordway, and the result is an organized church.

Then we find him in Mayville, where the Rev. Mr. Peck had in January, 1849, organized an Old School Presbyterian church. He describes the operation and the product of the iron furnace at Iron Ridge. The yield was five tons per day of pig iron, at twenty-six dollars per ton.

He is next in a place called Eden, although in nowise the Eden of Scripture. Then he goes back to Beaver Dam, to attend the October convention. Thence he sets out for the pinery, passing up through Strong's Landing (now Berlin), Grand Rapids, Plover, and thence to Stevens Point, 36 with its twenty houses; thence up to Bull Rapids, on the Wisconsin, as far as the present city of Wausau. He finds forty-seven saw mills along the Wisconsin River, and from fifteen hundred to two thousand men engaged in rafting logs and lumber. These rafts go to Galena, thence to St. Louis. Chicago is not yet a point of interest, in fact is only mentioned once in the whole diary, and that several years later on.

This one tour of exploration occupied some seven weeks of the autumn and early winter of 1849. Newly settled families were found here and there in the wilderness, and embryo villages began to appear. To these our missionary came as a reminder of that gospel with which the most of them had been familiar in the old home. Here and there was a live Christian, with a well-ordered household. But it was painful to see how many had come into the new land as if to throw off the once-borne yoke of Christ, and even the restraints of civilization.

In June, 1850, he encounters the Fourierite community at Ceresco, under the leadership of Warren Chase. He considers the influence here, deadly to all Christian life. Of thirty families who maintained family worship and church connection, when they went in, not one continued the practice after the first year. The writings of Fourier and of Andrew Jackson Davis prevailed, and in 1851 the spiritual rappings appeared. He predicted what actually came to pass, the material as well as the moral failure of the scheme. There now remain

only the ruined remnants of the old community, in the valley just below the city of Ripon. But his visits to this place resulted in the Congregational church at Ripon.

In October, 1850, he is again at the convention at Beaver Dam, and records the following ministers as present: L. C. Spofford, E. G. Bradford, J. S. Kanouse, O. Johnson, and Hiram Marsh. We find also that C. E. Rosenkrans was stationed at Columbus.

February 8, 1851, he preaches in Fond du Lac, for Mr. Spofford. February 12, he is in Omro, and assists Mr. 37 Bigelow. May 10, he assists in the organization of the church in Omro; he finds Oberlin perfectionism there. Again he is in Rosendale, with Mr. Birdeman. At Oshkosh, at an earlier date, which I cannot now recall, he had taken part in the organization of a church; Mr. Freeman was the minister.

And so, all over this region, from Green Bay to Baraboo, from Wausau to Columbus and Manitowoc, our missionary passed and re-passed during the years 1849–56. There was not a village or a rustic community unvisited by him, and where he did not seek to establish Christian institutions. These explorations were made on horse-back, over ill-defined pathways and unbridged roads. Sometimes he was lost—once in a cedar swamp, in which horse and man were obliged to spend the night. Another time, his horse was mired, and he walked several miles before getting help to pry the animal out. Often the missionary was in peril from the elements, and from vicious men. But all over this region he continued, with unwearied devotion, to read, pray, and exhort in families, and to preach in private houses or in school houses or upper halls. Often we find him prescribing at the sick-bed, when the physician was far away, or when the expense of one could not well be borne.

In 1852 he removed from Green Bay to Waupaca, where he had purchased a tract of land to make a home for his family; henceforth his head-quarters are there. He organizes a church at Waupaca and one at Pine River, also looks after Weyauwega.

From 1850 to 1853, there was a remarkable pouring in of people from the East. Foreign immigration had by that time hardly attracted notice. New England and New York institutions were rapidly developing in Wisconsin. Farms would open as if by magic; villages of five hundred or one thousand inhabitants would spring up in a few months or a year. It was a busy task to attend to them all, and see that ministers were supplied and sustained. Marsh, as the earliest on the ground, and fully alive to the importance of the northeastern part of the State, was incessant in travel, 38 in personal effort, in preaching and in correspondence; During the first fifteen years of his residence in the Fox River valley, it is safe to say that there was not a white family north of that river. The incoming tide of civilization found him here, awake to the needs of the hour. To his intelligent and ready zeal, much of the church planting and growth in this district is due.

The regions to the south and west, the earlier-settled parts of the State, were occupied by other and equally zealous pioneer ministers. The Wisconsin Congregational convention have erected a monument over the grave of Stephen Peet, who so zealously labored in the south. Others were equally deserving in other parts of the State. But none who labored in Wisconsin, whether we consider the time at which his labors began or the intelligent experience and zeal brought to bear upon them, are deserving of more honor than Cutting Marsh.